

ROBERT FLEMING

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THE
Present Aspect
OF OUR
TIMES,

And of the
Extraordinary Conjunction
Of Things therein.

In a Rational View and Prospect of the same ;
As it respects the Publick Hazard and Safety
of *Brittain* in this Day.

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L O N D O N,

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IT is one of the great Trials of Judgment and Prudence, to know when it may be more suitable to be silent, than to speak: Silence is usually the safest hand for Men to err on, especially in a Subject of so High, and Publick Concern as this, when so great a variation of Light is unavoidable, amongst Men of the most Judicious Spirits; so that I may say, it hath made it not easie to enter on a Province of such a nature: For I know my self to have more cause, to understand Counsels, and Thoughts of others, than to offer what may be mine, in so Knowing an Age as this: But since the Integrity of a Design is in any case, a special Support; and that I may witness, it is under no Private Influence or Engagements, I have exposed this to the Publick View; I shall offer no other Apology, but that in such a Hazardous Time, *cuiuslibet privato licet agere causam publicam*, when it touches

on no Fundamental Constitutions, nor offers any Disturbance herein: And as there is none but hath some proper Interest in the Publick; so is he accountable by a Just Right to the Service thereof; *& in extremo discrimine unusquisque est miles.*

It's sure an Advantage, when the sense of any Hazardous Case, whether it respects the Publick, or Mens Personal State, doth neither exceed nor fall short of the true grounds thereof: But this appears now to be a Time, when there may be more fear of a Deficiency, than Excess, on such an account; and Danger is oft nearest, when it is least apprehended. It is certain, that some Times have a more strange and extraordinary Aspect on the Publick State of a Nation, than may be in the ordinary course of things, or than useth to precede some great Vicissitudes; and it's such in this Age, that the State of *Brittain* and *Ireland* hath been a Theatre of such Amazing Concussions and Changes, as no History past can bear a Resemblance thereto, in such Surprizing Various Scenes as have been Acted therein; nor can any suitable Reflection be on the same, without Admiration, to this day, how these Nations have not been swallowed up, and got safe out of all these Civil Storms that have successively followed each other; but yet with respect thereto, there seems to be such a present Juncture and Period now in the Publick State of Affairs, as exceeds all that's past, and a Time that speaks he *Crisis* to be in the very highest *apex* of its Conflict betwixt Nature and the Disease, either to Life or Death: When the Wisest Pilots found it never more difficult to steer an even and safe Course betwixt Rocks and Quick-sands, when the Compass is like to fail, and is so difficult either to keep or gain ground against a cross Wind and Tide; when the Present State of things is a Sea of many Currents, that
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do at once meet together. There is usually a growing Decay by the Distempers of the Politick Body, as well as of the Natural, which hath an inevitable Progress, to the Dissolution thereof, if not timely prevented, before it prove too late to overcome the strength of the Disease. But there are two things this day which may be sadly apprehended, as to the Consequences thereof; one is, to what a height Intestine Distempers in the Present State of *Brittain* are come; which have their Time of Breeding as well as of Breaking forth; and, when not regarded, use not to Dissolve without a new Storm; yea, have a most sad and mortal Aspect, when they prove so Incurable as to despise all Moral Relief, or any Restraints, from that Advantage the Publick Adversary gets hereby; when it's more easie to make a Breach, than to stand up therein, against Visible Hazard; or to Sacrifice Private Resentments to the Interest and Safety of their Countrey. But there is another Hazard which may be too justly fear'd herewith, of the Desertion and Falling off of many from the Publick State, either by Prejudices and Discontent, or an Indifference and Irresoluteness to fix, until they see a further Decision, and to know the way to be safe. It's true, that Men of the choicest Spirit, in a Time of Commotions, to avoid the Scene and Disturbances of a Troubled Time, and with respect to the Calm and Serenity of their own Mind, may find it desirable to retire, and be abstract from the Hurryings that are abroad, which cannot be strange or mistaken, if it shuts out no Duty, nor Service for their Countries Interest and Safety; but it must be a Stretch above an ordinary Reason and Understanding, if such as are Protestants, and truly interested in the Rights and Liberties of the Nation, can have a Divided Interest from the same, or project to themselves another

another Port to put in at, for Publick Security, or fix on any ground else, if they should fall off from this Anchorage. It is the End that determines the Means, and the Intenfensels of Mens Spirits thereon, that tends to a Resolute and Unwearied Endeavour for Attaining the same, to have things brought on unto a steady Issue; but now, when it bears such clear Evidence, to be both *pro aris & focis*, either to do or die; it's then that Reason and Necessity leave no room for a Faint, or a Suspence herein.

There is nothing more suitable in the way of Reason, than for such as have a more Immediate Call and Interest than others, to enquire into the Natural Springs of such cross Events and Difficulties, that may not be easie to comprehend in an ordinary way, as they come under Humane Management; and which does then visibly tend to lay a dead Weight on Publick Actings, and cause their Motions to drive heavily; since otherwise the greatest Advantage of Strength, should be little available, without such Measures of Wisdom, as to direct and apply the same to its proper End: But it is sure in nothing is Reason more highly Exerted for a Nation's Safety, than on this Principle of Eternal Truth, that no State can be safe with any Advantage of Means, if it be not under a Divine Conduct and Protection, that thus growing Difficulties and Disappointments might be traced to a higher Issue, than Visible Causes, as under a deep Sense and Impression of this, that God hath not forsaken the Earth. No Despondent Fear of Events should at any time weaken Mens hands in the Work of their Day, or take them off from present Duty; yea, were there the most clear and predictive Evidences of an Imminent Stroke and Ruin, yet might it not shut out the highest Efforts both of Counsel and Strength,

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for a Peoples Preservation : And as God does determine the End by Infallible Predestination; so does he move also by Inferior Causes and Means; for which he renders Men accountable, as to the utmost Improvement hereof, both for their Safety and Success : Yet hath this ever been in the procedure of Providence remarkable, that before any Great and Extraordinary Events, both as to Kingdoms and Cities, there have been then more remarkably than at other times, Monitory Signs and Warnings, which as Heralds, were directed with a proper Commission and Authority, to awaken Men to their Duty. And as it is one of the great Demonstrations of a Deity ; so does it ever witness the tender Respect of the Divine Majesty to Humane Race, and the Work of his own hand ; and the Condecency of his Government, both to the Excellencies of his own Nature, and Constitutions of his Word ; but if any such Immediate Appearances of God, be not then suitably regarded, and operative by a Moral Influence on Mens Spirits, it may be a too evident Presage that things are hastening to some sad and determinate Ruine, by an unpreventable Providence, which I fervently desire may not be applicable to this Time.

As to what is peculiarly designed in this following Discourse, it is to offer some Thoughts in a Rational View and Prospect of the Present State we are in, and what manner of Time it is, with respect to the Publick Concerns and Security of *Brittain*, as it respects Visible Causes hereof: For as no Sign is more promising, than, when the Things of the Day are specially regarded in the proper Season thereof, answerable to the Consequences that are Dependednt on the same: So is the Voice of Reason, in its True and Regular Exercise assuredly the Voice of God both to Nations and Persons.

And,

And, I hope, such an Address as this, may not be mistaken, when it demands no further Regard from any, than the Evidence and Truth of what's here offer'd, does make way for.

1. It is unquestionable, that the first Entry of a Cure, must be in discerning the Cause and Nature of the Disease; and that in no Case this is more called for, than with respect to Publick Hazard at a distance: That a due sight and sense hereof, must go before Prevention of the same, e're it be too late. It is a Proposal that may be now justly made; if *England*, with the other two Nations, be not stated in such a Conjunction, upon its Future Safety and Preservation, as seems to have no Parallel from former Presidents, to answer such a Case. It is indeed placed, as a World by it self, which is locally divided from the whole Earth beside: But this cannot secure it from any Remarkable Hazard within, or that easie Access may be thus given to a Forraign Power and Design. What Men see with their Eyes, and is matter of Ocular Demonstration, can be no dark Problem now, that it is not the *French* Power alone, in its most strenuous workings; or any hid Design of an Intestine Party, that's to be fear'd this Day, - in their divided Capacities; but the Joynt-Interest of both, in such a Correspondence: and under these Circumstances things are now stated, as hath not been formerly known; and when Hazard in such gradual and near Approaches, hath so remarkable an Aspect, it may need both a piercing Eye and Intelligence to prevent a Surprise that may not find us asleep. It is such a Day, when an Adversary at our Gates, and another within, seems to wait every Advantage, when both the *French* Success and Strength, is at another pitch than hath been in Times past, whose Disposition and Intent lies so visibly for

for War, wherever with any favourable prospect they can open the same more than a Counterfeit Profession made for Peace: And so far may it be seen, if the Watching Eye of Providence do not interpose, that a Train is in some unusual manner laid, and working to its last Effort, more against *Brittain*, than any other Reformed State, as may need the utmost of Counsel and Resolution to countermine the same, before the springing thereof; when the loss of Time and Opportunity for such an End, seem'd never more Fatal if not suitably Improved; and it leaves no room to question that we are stated against such an Adversary, as is waiting every Advantage, and wants no Force or Conduct to manage the same; whose greatest Fear and Indignation does terminate upon *England*, and the United Provinces this day, more than on any place else: But know, the Strength of such a Design lies in the Closeness thereof, to keep off any Unnecessary Discovery, and is not, as with some Labourers with their hands, who at every stroke give a groan: But what herewith should make the Prospect of such a Hazard more tremendous, is what may be fear'd of a too numerous Party, that lie as in Ambush, from within, to act a more Tragick and Bloody Scene in these Nations, if occasion did offer, than hath been ever known; as if they knew no other way to Rise but on a Publick Ruine, and could be Witnesses, without weeping at a Nations Funeral. I do not question but that many in this Day, may be too deeply engag'd in sad and cross Designs to the Present Settlements; as suppose to themselves a consistence herein with the Publick Safety, and that it should be only to change the Scene with new Actors therein. I confess if they fix the Conclusion before the Premises, and can judge by contraries, they may account then such a thing might be supposable; but if they

give Reason once leave to exercise second Thoughts, it cannot be conceivable to their own Judgment, that a new Overturning could again take place, but that a most Bloody and Tragick Part should commence therewith; and that if ever the *French* and *Romi* Power get up to the Bench, this Scene may then by unavoidable Consequence be reckoned, as the Measure of their Acting; to have in the first place the Protestant Interest, with such as have any true Zeal or Value for the same, pay the Expence for all that is past, and stand as Criminal at the Bar: And if it should not be easie to turn the same wholly off the Stage, yet to have it stand alone, and be reduced to its Primitive State, to subsist without Humane Support or Countenance, so as it may serve, as *Sampson*, for its Adversaries Triumph; when without fear that even then it may pull down the House upon them: But the next step to follow hereon, by too evident a Result, is to be once Avenged of that great Supporter of the Nations Rights and Liberties, which hath so long stood in their way, and still break their Measures, when they seemed most secure herein; but what herewith is more than supposable, would be their greatest Strength, and with some favourable Pretence lie here, to serve themselves of one part of the Nation, as Friends, to destroy the other, until the whole be render'd utterly incapable of Self-defence, that it might at last be made a Publick Sacrifice to Implacable Revenge: When such then as have been made serviceable to so great a Ruine, should know how dear a Purchase a late Repentance is; to have seen themselves thus run on their own Swords by a Self-Assassination, and involved thus their Children, and dear Relations in Publick and Irrevocable Ruine. But when I now write this, it is, I may say, with Abhorrence of unsuitable Reflection on the Persons of any, as might
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in the least prejudice Justice and Truth, or to stretch the Designs of the greatest Adversaries, beyond what Impartial and Just Reason makes unavoidable: But I must oppose the clearest Prospects of Sense and Reason, unless I see that any Destructive Opposition to the Government and Publick Settlements this Day, if it did prevail, should be such as in the Issue and Consequences thereof, might make them become a Terrour to themselves, who should be Actors therein, and do not apprehend where such a Tyde might carry beyond their present Intent.

2. It may be thus clear and demonstrable to unprejudged Reason, that never was a greater Cause brought upon the Stage, as to an Eventual Determination, than in the Present State of this War, as is now stated against *France*, which both its Justice and Necessity hath made so unavoidable: Yea, that a higher Interest did never lie at the Stake, with respect to the Reformed Churches, than at this Day; as cannot but raise Extraordinary Thoughts upon the Issue of such a Scene, wherein these Principal Concerns, both as we are Men and Christians, are so nearly interested. What may be the *French* Designs in such a Time, needs not in this respect a deep Scrutiny, when the Measure thereof may be so clearly judged by the Height and Measure of their Power, and where to this are set no Bounds: It's no Moral Arguments from Justice and Equity can be expected, to give a Restraint thereto, or make a Peace or Settlement safe for any, who are not upon an equal Foot, to secure the Violation thereof. And as for the Honour and Publick Faith of *France*, neither will that be sufficient to secure a Peace, tho' it should be laid in Pledge, more than the Punick Faith was of old; since that Kings way, not only to the *French* Protestants, but to the Princes of the Ro-

man Catholick Religion, hath given too certain a Trial, that his Claim of Right is of the same Extent as his Sword can make it, which hath been hitherto the Decisive Judge thereof; so as the Adjacent Princes have at last found it more safe to have him for an Adversary than a Friend. It was once Queen *Elizabeth's* Motto, *No Peace with Spain*, which could not be justifiable, but upon such grounds and necessity as are now more demonstrable in this present Case: For War is undoubtedly to be reckoned the highest Act of Vindictive Justice, both upon Necessary Defence, and for Prevention of Imminent Hazard. It cannot be denied but that this Year 93. hath given a new Testimony before the World to the Repute and Honour of the King, both of the greatness on an Heroick Courage, and Wise Conduct amidst Extraordinary Difficulties and Oppositions: And that if the Spirit of this great Prince had not some remarkable Ascendant on the present Adversary, his Motions probably might have been directed to much higher Attempts, and gone beyond all Bounds; but it may be seen likewise, that the Events of this Year, call for some Extrordinary Observation of the same. And in the first place, to a more absolute Settling of our Dependencies on God: But as things lie under Humane Management, there may be a further Call to see that it will not be easie to keep ground, or avoid some remarkable Loss of the same, if it be not with that Strenuous and United Assistance followed, as under Divine Conduct may bring things to some desirable Decision; since Attempts otherwise might prove as the forcing a great Stone up a Hill, that upon any faint, or slackning of Strength, goes a greater way back. And it's easie to judge, that any new Success, or Advantage the *French* do gain, carries them to take new Measures and Resolutions, as their way thus is prepared. It is not
questionable,

questionable, but that each Passenger in the Vessel, when a Storm riseth, hath the same proper Interest and Adventure in its Safety, when it's like to perish. All's well as the common Concern of all therein is necessarily engaged. No Station is so low where Men are not slated in some capacity to act for the Interest of their Countrey, tho' all have not the same Room and Trust herein: And the greater Difficulties that Publick Services are beset with, it will ever tender to render the Issue more honourable, and such a Reward to its self, as exceeds the lower Motives, with Men of a truly Publick Spirit. There's an undoubted Circulation in the Politick Body as well as in the Natural; so as Services done and designed for the same, in an Extream Case, will return with some Signal Advantage and Reward of Honour, to them or theirs, tho' for many days it should not appear so. It hath no less appeared in the Issue, how sad and fatal a Prudence it was, that hath divided such from the common Interest of their Countrey and People, to avoid Hazard, and to be thus unresolved where to fix, until the Ballance be cast to some absolute Decision, as such who are only determined by Events, but not by Principles.

3. It is certain that things can have no true Rest or Settlement but in their proper Center, which must otherwise move in a perplex and uncertain Agitation, which is ever no less evident in the Politick Body of a Kingdom and State, than in the Constitutions of Nature, that it must have a Central and Uniting Interest, whereby the Stability of the whole Frame, is fixt, and its Motions rendered steady and concentrick with the same. It's hereby that both the Security of Sacred and Civil Interests, is settled on such sure ground, as may take off Suspicion, or Distrust of such cross and extrinsick Motions that may prove destructive thereto. It is surely according

ing to this, that the Publick Safety and Interest of *Brittain* this Day must be rationally judged, when it bears such a prevailing Influence on Mens Spirits; as to subordinate all Inferiour Designs and Counsels thereunto, and to Interest them against whatever tends to break such a Conjunction: For it's not the strongest Ligaments of the Law, or of a Servile Fear thereof, that will bind, if these Ligaments of Love and of Mutual Dependence, in a way of Trust and Assurance, should be once broke, and the Contracted Interest of a Party takes off that Propension and Respect, that should be to the Publick State of the Body; which without Prophecy may presage some great Ruine to be then impendent; when instead of Mutual Trust, private Enmities and cross Actings take the room thereof, and goes above any Relief. And with respect to this, I hope it cannot be questioned what by the highest Reason is so demonstrable; in what relation both Their Majesties now upon the Throne of *Brittain* stand, as to the Present Safety of these Nations and Future Security; and what an Interest they carry in their hand on such an account, so as this Bond of Union cannot possibly be slacked, or made void, without subverting the Foundations of the whole Frame, and a Fatal Dissolution of the same. The firmest Settlement of Government proves oft too weak to support, when an intire Settlement of Mens Spirits keeps not foot therewith, and a sense of their own Interest and Security under the same, to Influence an Uniting Temper in the common Cause. It should be strange if the State wherein *England* was a few Years past, be not to this Day kept in sight, and these sad Depressions and Terrours on Mens Spirits, which did hold them under so visible a Bondage, when it was valued at so high a rate, to be once again Witness to such a Time, when Law and
Justice

Justice should be Settled and Certain Measures of the Government as is this Day. It is not questionable but that Private Losses must deeply affect Mens Spirits, and have a just Sense thereof, wherein the Publick Interest does also suffer; but it should be a Direful Effect, to alienate thus from the Government, upon the Miscarrying of any Inferiour Instruments, or to reckon their Conditions could be bettered by a Change; as in the Fable of the Froggs, who could not be satisfied until they at last got such a Prince and Ruler, whose Power was only extended to devour them. It is a Blessing rarely given a Nation, to have such at the Helm in a Tempestuous Time, whose Interest all may see indissolubly conjoyn'd with the Publick, and ready to Sacrifice his nearest Concerns, on that Altar of the Nations Safety and Preservation, whose Religion is one and the same with theirs, and endued both with true Greatness of Mind, and a Judicious Prudence to grapple with growing Hazards. It is known how the Protestant State of the *Netherlands*, did rise, and prevail against so Potent a Force, as was then against them, which next to Divine Assistance, was by being so harmoniously unite, and spirited by the common Love of their Religion, Countrey and Liberties, and by what entire confidence they had in that Illustrious House of *Orange*, who were the alone great Instruments to raise and deliver the same: And as by a Divine Destination Prince *William*, whose Memory is so famous to the World, did lay his whole Interest at the Stake to raise and deliver the same, when almost swallowed up by an Arbitrary Power: So now by a most singular Providence hath the Security and Restauration of *England* with the other two Kingdoms from such Imminent Hazard terminated in this great Prince, and hath been reserved for him; which is an Honour, with respect to
that

that Illustrious House in a successive Line, to be such Eminent Patriots, both as to Sacred and Civil Rights, that hath rarely occurred in the course of Humane Affairs to any Princes, or Family in the World, and is a remark of such an Extraordinary Providence, as cannot be easily past.

4. It is surely a great Advantage, when in a Time of Publick Danger there is a true Estimate and Judgment made of a Nations Intrinsick Strength, which in a Humane way, is the alone stable, and permanent Interest thereof, by which they can understand the true Measure both of their Fears and Hope on such an account; and may be thus secured from a Fatal Mistake, in any Extraordinary Case. I know the numerous Encrease and Growth of a People, is truly an Evidence of growing Strength; but yet this does not always hold, or can be judged by Number or Poll, since the more spreading a Community may be of a Nation, the more sad Aspect it hath, if a degenerate Race should get up, where the prevalency of Debauchery and Immorality, does so naturally tend to depress the Genius of a People, and the pursuance of any Honourable Ends; yea strikes at the Root of all Civil and Moral Duties, where the true Security of a Government lies. Nor does a Kingdoms Strength from within it self, lie in the Measure of External Preparations for the Publick Safety (the most absolutely necessary) so much as in the Interior Spring both of Resolution and Integrity herewith, to put these agoing in their due order and place, as *Solomon* speaks, that there needs more Strength to be added, if the Iron be blunt; yet Wisdom alone is profitable to direct, as the Leading Principle of all Exterior Motions: And it may be seen what a prevalence the Spirit of some, when it is of a higher Elevation and Capacity than in others, will have to actuate and enliven a multitude to such Services,

as may be above their ordinary Reach, which is usually one of the most promising Signs to a Kingdom, when such are in any singular way then raised with some peculiar excellency of Spirit, for the work of that Time.

But as to what might be most conducive for such an End to secure and promote the Interest of *Brittain*, in its true, stable, and permanent Strength from within it self, and to have a right Prospect thereof, I do not pretend to judge; this being a Subject proper and suitable to such under whose hand the Directing and Governing Power lies, and stand related as Eyes to the Nation to watch for its Safety; yea when so much may be justly in this Day expected from these; only with a humble and due distance, I shall adventure to point at some things in a distinct way, that I hope will not come under question, to be most nearly related to this great End.

1. That it's both the Glory and Strength of a Nation in sad and hazardous Times, to have an open Testimony of their Fear and Dependance on God, kept upon the Face of all Publick Actings; of him under whose hands, the Government and Dominion of the World does absolutely stand, and who alone is the Protector of Nations; since Reason cannot possibly find another way to be safe upon any Temporal Interest, or for Mens being true to themselves, but in the Truth and Seriousness of Religion; so as in the greatest Exigence these can never be distinguisht, what is just, and what is safe, being Convertible Terms. But it's on this Subject, I have been oft put to some astonishing Thoughts, how Religion should have so great an Influence to turn about the Publick Affairs and Concerns of the World, and this way to have much Rule over the Actions of Humane Life, when it hath so small a Vital Influence on Mens Minds, in order to the highest Ends thereof, and for

an Eternal Interest, when it goes thus no further, than an empty and unlivened Form; yea to see with what Intenseness Names of discrimination are stated on such an account.

2. It is of undoubted Evidence likewise that the Protestant Reformed Religion, which is the pure and genuine Truth of Christianity, is the Strength and permanent Interest of *England*, and both the other Kingdoms this Day: This needs no Evidence of Conviction to such for a close Adherence to the same, who are too wise and sensible of their own Safety, to put themselves again under the Popish Yoke, after so dear and Expensive a Trial hath been hereof; or that in a Time of such Light, it could be possible upon Choice to give up their Reason and Judgment unto others, by an Implicit Trust, and not see with their own Eyes; but to account a Blind Obedience one of the great Excellencies of their Faith; yea when there can be no Compounding here, where so Impassable a Gulf is fixt, betwixt these two Professions. But the things pertaining to the Conscience, and of the highest Publick Interest, should have a small regard, as may be judged with too many: Yet is there a concern of another nature to influence in this case; that if ever Popery should be capable to pursue its Antient Title and Inheritance, then a numerous Party of the most Eminent Families in these Nations, might be in hazard to have theirs swallowed up hereby, whatever pretences may for a time be made otherwise: Yea, that if it once got on Horseback, they might be then put to walk on foot; and under the power of such a Religion be made to Sacrifice the Hearth unto the Altar; who upon more high and noble grounds, were not suitably excited, to withstand the first Invasions thereof, and to have this great End with

with respect to Divine Truth made theirs: And if things past may be Prognosticks of future, it is known what Breaches the *French* Power hath of late made, not only on Mens Rights and Civil Socceity; but on Humanity it self, as in the Palatinate and other Adjacent places; and in such measures of Cruelty, as was acted against the Protestants in *France*, which was with the highest Violations of the Law of Gratitude towards them, whose Ancestors were so Assistant to bring the House of *Bourbon* to the Throne, and stem that Tyde of the Catholick League, which was against the same: But if a Just Reflection be made also, on what may lie yet nearer to us, for Eviction of this, it might be easie to see, how different the state of things, from what was in the Year Eighty Eight, is this Day, upon the most valuable Interest and Security of such a nature which Men possibly can enjoy, whereby a Title to their Religion, Lives, and Liberties, hath not got a Legal holding, without fear of any Designed Violation of the same by Force.

3. It is unquestionable also, that where a People is in the way of their Strength, and under propitious Influences from Heaven for their Security, that some remarkable Gale of Counsel and Prudence, useth then to go along therewith; and in seasonable applications of the same to the present Day: Yea that the Measure of a Nations Strength in a Humane way, may be accordingly thus judged to know, both what is to be done, and what is to be avoided, to see and foresee things that may lie remote from the Ordinary Judgment of many, both as to the tendency of Hazard, and preparations thereto, and from what point a Storm may be near to break up. It's true, the most knowing and judicious, that watch for their Conuntries Safety,

may meet oft with Surprising Accidents, that then seem'd not supposable to them: But it is known likewise what Improvements of Reason and Counsel, have in a most singular way been attain'd, when Difficulties and Hazards have gone above any ordinary Judgment herein: It's in this respect, there is such a Divination of Judicious Prudence for prevention of Hazard, as may be called Natural Prophecy, though it have a Divine Rise and Original, and is given to a People as one of the most Eminent Blessings from Heaven: Yea verifies that Sacred Truth, how Wisdom is preferable to Strength, and strengtheneth the Wise, more than Ten Mighty Men, that are in the City. But on this Subject I need speak little, when so much this Day may be justly hoped for, from the Wisdom of Publick Counsels, and such Experienced Pilots that are at the Helm in so Threatning a Storm, who know in this present Conjunction, how to have such a Scheme of Prevention judiciously settled, with respect to Visible Hazard, as may not leave the same to a Surprise, upon any sudden Emergents, or for taking Counsel too late. It hath been hitherto the Result of most Deliberate Counsels, to meet Publick Hazard at a distance, rather than wait for its nearer Approach; when otherwise it seems more than conjectural, where so high a Flight of the *French* Ambition and Power, should have come e're now without such a prevalent Stop; and may be yet judged, that since a Design was never more working than is this Day, how to try their Strength on British ground, if their Will and their Power were commensurate.

4. It surely may be a special Indication also of the Standing Interest and Strength of *Brittain* from within, in such a Time as this, by what Advantage is gain'd, to have

have the Publick Government, so far as is possible, rooted in the general Affection and Esteem of the People; and that Mutual Confidence and Trust fixed, which is the Life and Sinews of Government, and all Humane Society, so as by a constraint of Reason, they can see, how the King and the Nation this Day, are so nearly Conjoyn'd and Stated in that Relation, as to be the Mutual Interest and Safety of other; and how his Just Greatness and Rights, with the whole Legal Freedom and Liberties of the People, are so joyntly founded on the same Basis, as to beget an entire Acquiescence of Mind herein; and how thus the Foundation is sure and adequate to the Structure that rests thereon; so that not by Fear, or on the Influence of an Imperative Power, but by an Elicite Choice from Love and Esteem the Government may be Establish'd, and that Homage due to the Sovereign, be given, not by the Knee alone, but by the Heart. It can come under no question in what Posture the State of *England* was in, before this late Revolution, and what Mortal Signs then was, of some great Ruine to be near, when the Government was like to become more *French* and *Italian*, than *English*; and the Late King so far engag'd to Espouse a Party instead of the Publick Body, by joyning in with the *Romish* Counsels and Power to promote that Interest, as he had so far pass'd the Rubicon, in what was so visibly cross to the Establish'd Laws and Constitutions of the Nation: But as this is too late to be forgot; so it is not conceivable by any Humane Rule, that in another way the Publick State this Day can be preserved, than in the same way wherein, by so Extraordinary a Destination of Providence it was attained; and I judge, that
none

none of a Considerate Spirit can suppose any Destructive Design to the Publick Settlements, should take place, but by so Bloody a Scene, as no Humane Relief could stop it, in the way of Reason, until it resolv'd in the Dismal and Tragick Effects. It is true, the private Burthens of many in these Times, may be very pungent and fore, which they who look at a distance thereon, do too little regard; but when the Publick Safety is at the Stake, and evident, at how dear a Rate there would be Compounding of the same, if Adversaries got further Advantage; it cannot but have a Ballancing Weight, on Mens Spirits, when they see, how all that can be Valuable to them within Time, is conjoyn'd therewith.

5. Though the Extensive Interest of *Brittain*, in its present Increase, is such, that it may be said to be, as the Sand of the Sea in number; yet since the True and Intrinsic Strength of a People, does ever respect the Quality, more than the Bulk and Extent thereof; it cannot be otherwise understood in this Day, or a true Measure of our Hope on this account, but by such a promising and true Growth of these who are Acted on some higher Account than their private Concerns, to joyn their Interest with the Publick, in a Time of Hazard, and not from a low and servile Spirit in this matter; who have such a Sense both of Religion and Honour, as to render them True to any Publick Trust they are in, and does seek no otherwise but in the way of Services and Just Merit to have an Intrinsic Interest in the Affection and Esteem of their Countrey; who account the Reward of being Serviceable to the Publick Interest, a Compensation for any Trouble or Loss they can sustain hereby, and holds

holds no Repute from Ostentation of the same, since any true Excellency and Worth, even amongst the worst of Men, hath such an Interest in Humane Nature, as they cannot possibly deny some hid Veneration thereto, nor forego a just sense hereof, even where Enmity and Envy is prevalent : And it's indeed one of the most high and desirable Ends that Men can attain in their Day, to have done or designed something in a more than ordinary way, for the present Generation, and their Countries Interest in a Hazardous Time : Yea this does render the same, more highly comforting and honourable, as a Service of this kind, hath been beset with greater Difficulties and Opposition than usual. But when I touch this, there's something that cannot be disjoyn'd from it, to advance thus the Stability, and Strength of a Nation, from within it self, and of great use for this End, which is in a suitable Retribution of Reward and Favour from the Publick to any just Merit, which hath a special tendency to give Encouragement and Life to Honourable Acts and Attempts; yea, to take off Resentments that might be occasioned by any unaccountable Ingratitude, as *Solomon* observes; and does too usually occur in the Management of Humane Affairs, that a poor wise Man, (as is there shewed) helpt by his Wisdom to save a City, yet no Man did regard him herein : It is known from the History of all Times, how Instruments and Means, are remarkably rais'd and acted forth, according to the Designs of Providence about such a place; but where it is known aright, it may then give accordingly a Signal Prognostick upon a Nations standing or falling. But it comes upon the same Concern, to have some equal Respect also, and a suitable Resentment

ment of any sinistrous and cross Actings, to the common Interest ; so as it may with a special note appear, that there is no way for Men, either to secure their Credit, or private Concerns upon any special Trust, by being unfaithful to the Publick ; and that such must stand or fall this way, by their Integrity herein. It is true, it may oft be Mens Lot to be unfortunate and not false ; and things managed with the most sincere Design, and without any Deficiency either of Courage or Wisdom, falls under great Disappointments and Cross Events ; but this rarely wants such Evidence, as may justify the same, to the Conviction of all unprejudiced, and secure from all unjust grounds of suffering hereby.

6. But there is a Concern of another nature, wherein the Standing and Strength of a Nation is especially interested, and seem'd never more applicable than now, to the State of *Brittain* ; to have such a Temper settled in a Dividing Time, and amidst these numerous Differences, amongst the most serious Protestants, as may not in Extream Hazard, obstruct an Unite Acting for the Publick Interest, or divide the Nations Strength from it self. It's true, there can be no possible Reconcilement, on a Politick Account, of Light and Darkness ; nor can Truth and Errour ever have a coalition, or be compounded, or admit any Indifference about things of Sacred Concern : But on the other hand it's evident, that the Rearing up of Walls of partition, this way, have a strange and dismal Aspect ; so far as they tend to shut out Friends from any harmonious Concurrence to the Publick Safety, and gives any Strength to the Adversary to enter thereby. I know that Mens Reason and Judgment are not in their

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own power to dispose of, or to make themselves believe what they please, no more, than in the most natural Acts of their Life; and that it is by Convictive Evidence, that such as are under the power of Reason, must have their Persuasion and Light determined; nor is it supposable to find any Humane Society, whether of Sacred or Civil Constitution, that will not be under some diversity of Light and Judgment; but yet this can give no rise or ground to obstruct a Concurrence and Union for the Publick Safety, or to stand together in such a Branch, when it is in some more than ordinary way call'd for. But it is well, that it is left useful to insist on a Subject of this nature, when the Wisdom and Prudence of those who are in Authority, and most nearly interested in the greatest Security of the Nation, can so fully judge, what may be most conducive to Union, the Present Interest in the Nation, and the same in this Case for the preservation of Publick Liberty: Yes, who knows how to distinguish the Differences of Circumstances of one Time from another, and when Reason this should have some Exception from any ordinary Rule, since this ever holds, *Quod Solus Populus est Supremus Lex*, and so the Basis and Foundation of all Laws, is founded in the Inalienable Justice thereof; so in their Subserviency to the Publick Interest of the whole Body, and with respect to what a Time may call for, in some Extraordinary Case, yes, when the proper Interest of one part, has given reason by a Legal Support, consistent then to be necessary, for a Publick Necessary Defence, and distance from such as are unquestionably Unite in the great Ends of Religion and Government, and hath their own Interest and

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Standing,

Standing, so closely imbarqued therewith, as to be Vouchers for their Fidelity, in their being capacitated for the same; and who by a Natural Right stands related to the Politick Body, as Citizens and Members thereof, and may have a considerable Influence to promote a common Interest, though in some things more remote from the same, there be a difference in Light and Judgment.

7. But I must yet adventure on such a Subject, to touch one particular more, that may possibly seem incongruous with what does precede; and when things of another nature takes now up the Spirits of most as to the Publick Security of the Nation, that is too clear, when seriously pondered, will be found to have a most near and indissoluble connection therewith; that since it's sure the true and permanent Interest of *Britain*, does stand by the Truth and Stability of Religion, and as it's now fixt in the purest Profession there, by an Unchangeable Rule, it must be then equal to judge, that the most Eminent Hazard and Weakning of the Publick State, does lie in the most destructive and prevalent Opposition to such an Interest, when it is as the Scales in the Ballance, where the Rise of the one, is the Depression of the other. It is on this Head that from a sad and irresistible Reflection; I cannot but see and refer it to the Reason and Judgment of all, what shall be the Issue of the Protestant Profession this Day, and how dismal and dark a night is like to fall down on these Nations, and on the Politick Interest thereof, if this Modern and Improved Atheism of these late Times, shall get further Strength, and make a New Conquest proportionably to what hath been in some Years past;

past, and where it is like to stand when its Approaches are so strange, as with pretences to Reason, to strike at the whole Interest and Foundations of Revealed Religion; for without some more than Ordinary Design and Care for prevention of the same, it is not like to resolve so much, in a Regress to Popery (though it gains thus a special Strength by the Inconsistencies of such a way, either with Reason, or with it self) but in a Visible Apostacy from the Christian Faith, that this Day may be most feared. It is unquestionable that this World and Humane Race and Society therein, could not Morally subsist as to any Order, Justice and Security amongst Men, without the Faith and Impressions of a Deity to bear out the same; nor could the Earth be possibly Habitable or Safe to Live therein, if the Sense of Religion, and Fear of an Invisible God, were not Implanted in him and Nature: But it's sure this must needs be more specially applicable to a Kingdom and People, which hath entered with greater Light and Engagements on so high and discriminating a Profession of Christianity, beyond most of the Earth; and that the Spreading Encrease of such a Contagion, and the Standing of a Nation in its Politick Interest and Concerns, will be found so incompatible, as that a Publick Ruine is then at hand. It was a just Saying of one of the Antients, on such an account, *Si tibi non vis parcere, attamen parce Patriæ tuæ*; and it was from so sad a prospect of this, that of late Mr. Robert Boyle (who was so great an Ornament, both to his Countrey, and Profession, as a Christian) did make it his last Design, to have some further Improvement made against so Mortal and

Growing a Contagion, by Settling a Fund for keeping up a Publick Lecture, which he committed to Select Trustees for making it Effectual, that might only be directed to such an End: Yea what a hopeful Prefage should it be this Day, if a Project of such a nature as this, might prove more exemplary, and to find Mens Spirits set more on such high and truly generous Designs, for the present and future Generation? We know in what manner the Zeal of the Romish Church, did carry them for that End, *de propaganda Fide*, so as to have a proper Settlement and Society Erected and set apart wholly in this respect, which should have been a most rare Undertaking, if it had not visibly Counter-acted such a Profession; yet is such an Example, as may be a Publick Witness, against the Indifference of the Reformed Churches, every where, too visible in this Case; and why there is not something in a more than ordinary way design'd, for the Defence of the Gospel, when it was never more put on a Defensive part, than now; and that all prevailing Evidence of the Truth and Divinity thereof, on Mens Spirits, is so much lost. If there were a considerable part of the Nation that profess Heathenism, it might be judg'd this would take with Men of Inferiour Controversies and Contendings, in behalf of the Christian Interest, and that their Strength would go forth this way; but is the Hazard less now, when the whole Revelation of Sacred Truth is in the Day-light attacked, by so numerous a Party; and when on the other hand it is so visible, how most who bear the Christian Name are destitute of any Defence of their Profession, from Internal Motives, or Perswasion hereof, from its own Evidence? I do not question but that

that under such a Magistracy and Government, as is this Day settled in *Britain*, but under a Prospect of such Hazard, they clearly see and discern that the Standing Interest and Security of the Nation, and the Safety of Religion, are of the same Extent, and must assuredly stand or fall together. But since it's the Youth, and Growing Race, wherein the Hope of a Nation does most specially lie, who seems to be now under the Saddest Influence of such a Contagion, and to be most susceptible thereof; yea these whose Quality may have a more Leading Influence than many others, and by whom the Publick Interest doth so much stand; it may be thus evident, that the most Adequate Mean for Prevention, and to answer such an End, does most peculiarly lie in the Publick Seminaries and Universities, where the Reformed Religion is profess'd. It is true, that there is no Deficiency there, as to the furthest Improvement of the Noëtick part of Divinity, and insisting on Modern Controversies, but rather to the Excess herein: But I must profess it as matter of Astonishment, that in such an Age the Draconerick part hereof is not more intently followed and improved; so that the Youth which are coming forward, both for Sacred, and Civil Employments, might be thus engaged to see with their own Eyes the Truth and Firmness of these Principles whereon their Profession is settled, and with such clearness of Demonstrative Evidence, as the great Author of our Religion hath so abundantly given for this Intent: It will be questioned by none, that the Natural Order of things does ever require the Foundation to be surely laid, before any Superstructure be rais'd: But as there is no want this Day to these who are most Eminently fitted

to answer such a Design, nor any Defect of Conviction of the Necessity hereof, why this is not more followed as a Work by it self, and as a Province that's capable of the greatest Improvements ; I must humbly judge, that this hath a special and too evident a Rise from this one Cause, that there is not a proper and distinct Settlement entirely on such a Design, as well as there is for any other Profession, so as this might be peculiarly followed : And it might be thus judg'd, what a face and stamp it might put, by a Divine Concurrence therewith, on the Spirits of Men, and of these who are now the Hope of the Succeeding Race, when in so Inquisitive an Age there should be some higher Excitement this way ; and when so many of late have been in an unusual manner carried out on that Choice Study, to know the true Phœnomina of Nature, and the proper Causes and Original of things, that there might herewith be some answerable desire and propension on a much higher account, to know these strong and firm Conveyances of the Christian Faith, with the certainty of its own Evidence ; and how no Natural Science can pretend to more clear and unanswerable Demonstrations, than the Truth of Supernatural Religion, in a rational and demonstrative way, to any considering Spirit. But since it is now on that ground, for which I especially touch this, upon such a Publick Interest, as the Standing and Safety of the Nation, hath so immediately therein, when Publick Hazard is otherways imminent ; I hope, to these who are in a higher Capacity, both to judge, and be assistant, in such a case, that a Concern of this nature will be no Indifferent thing ; and to see how great a National Interest this should make, that may be so effectual to promote

promote the Moral part of Religion and Relative Duties thereof, in a more Universal Diffusion of the same, and to take off that Brutish Credulity, which this Day is the Shame and Reproach of the Christian Profession; and which by a Native Result also should make way for higher Improvements, for the Establishment of Mens Spirits in the way of Truth; but which most specially also should have such a tendance to prepare and ripen a Ministry to the Church, who might be in a more peculiar way fitted to deal with Atheists and Infidels, and the greatest pretenders to Reason than hath been yet attained, by such Means as bear a most evident Congruity to Mens Natural Light and Reason, and to serve a Constraint thereon, so as to see that serious Religion must assuredly either be their Choice or their Torment: And how great a Service should this be to a National Interest and Flourishing, if this were more attain'd? Yea in a Time, when so numerous a part cannot be dealt with in another way, and take such Advantage for their prejudice and stumbling, when there is any want of a suitable Application of such Means.

FINIS.

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[The following text is extremely faded and largely illegible. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly names or titles, arranged in several lines.]

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